



NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday 3rd August, 2010

ENERGY DRINKS FUELLING SILENT EPIDEMIC

Increased consumption of soft drinks and energy drinks by Australian teenagers is fuelling a “silent epidemic” of tooth erosion, according to the Australian Dental Association South Australia (ADASA).

Recent research conducted in Australian schools has found that 68 percent of students have at least one tooth that exhibits signs of erosion.¹ This rate is significantly higher than those of their counterparts in the United States² and the United Kingdom³.

ADASA President, Dr Sharon Liberali, said the problem with most soft drinks and energy drinks is that the acid levels are so high. “Acid can directly damage the enamel surface of teeth, a process known as dental erosion, which has become a silent epidemic because we all tend to focus on tooth decay, rather than the damaging impacts of erosion.

“Unlike tooth decay, which is caused by bacteria, tooth erosion occurs by chemical attack without bacterial involvement. This means even people with perfect brushing and flossing can be at risk of tooth erosion.”

“People also shouldn’t be fooled by thinking that reduced or sugar free drinks are necessarily better for teeth.”

“In recent study conducted by the Australian Dental Association in partnership with Choice⁴, it found that sugar-free energy drinks such as Red Bull and V Energy had a higher acid reserve than most other fizzy drinks.

“Energy drinks are of particular concern because of their increasing popularity and availability to teenagers.”

Energy drinks are the fastest growing category in the convenience beverage market with sales increasing nearly 20 percent compared to last year⁵. They are now becoming increasingly available and are being sold in many different forms including half-litre cans and highly concentrated shots.

“Despite energy drinks being banned from sale in South Australian schools under the Rite Bite Healthy Eating Guidelines, they’re still being regularly consumed on the way to and from school and sometimes being taken into school by students,” said Dr Liberali.

“There aren’t set guidelines in place regarding how schools manage students bringing energy drinks into school.

“The ADASA is also aware that consumption of energy drinks can increase around exam time, when students are revising late into the night and looking to maintain their concentration.

A government study in Victoria found that approximately 80 percent of students aged 12 to 17 regularly consumed sugary soft drinks⁶. Ten percent drank three cans of high sugar soft drink every day.

“Australian teenagers can expect to keep their teeth for life and therefore the impact of tooth erosion, which is irreversible, can be a lifetime of treatment or discomfort” said Dr Liberali.

Preventing or at least minimising the impact of tooth erosion is paramount from an early age.”

The ADASA recommends the following guidelines if consuming acidic drinks:

- Avoid holding or ‘swishing’ drinks in the mouth as this increases acid exposure to teeth
- Use a straw as much as possible to minimise the acid exposure to teeth
- If you do drink an acidic or sugary beverage, drink it chilled as cooler temperatures have been shown to be less likely to cause tooth erosion
- After drinking acidic or sugary beverages, don’t brush your teeth right away – brushing can remove the softened tooth layer (resulting from the acid exposure), increasing the amount of tooth loss. Wait one hour before brushing teeth
- Instead of brushing, rinse with water – this will help remove any acids remaining in the mouth
- Fluoride mouthwashes without alcohol will rinse acids away and the fluoride will re-mineralise the tooth surface making it more resistant to acid attacks
- Chewing sugar-free gum can stimulate saliva flow and rinse acids away

For more information, visit www.dentalhealthweek.com.au

ISSUED BY HUGHES PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Simon Hatcher on 0419 780 071 or simon@hughespr.com.au

¹ Kazoullis S, Seow WK, Holcombe T, Newman B, Ford D. Common dental conditions associated with dental erosion in schoolchildren in Australia. *Pediatr Dent* 2007;29:33–39.

² Deery C, Wagner ML, Longbottom C, Simon R, Nugent ZJ. The prevalence of dental erosion in a United States and a United Kingdom sample of adolescents. *Pediatr Dent* 2000;22:505– 510.

³ Al-Dlaigan YH, Shaw L, Smith A. Dental erosion in a group of British 14-year-old, school children. Part I: Prevalence and influence of differing socioeconomic backgrounds. *Br Dent J*2001;190:145–149.

³ The foods that eat away your teeth. CHOICE June 2010-08-02

⁵ 2010 Nielsen Convenience and Impulse Report

⁶ Victorian Minister for Education Media Release. School action on high sugar content soft drink: Kosky. 21 April 2006.